

Chapter 11. Indigent Veterans and Unclaimed Remains

This section contains information on the following topics:

Topic	Topic Name
	Introduction
a	Definition of Indigent Veterans and Unclaimed Remains
b	Regional Office Responsibilities
c	Training for Indigent Veterans and Unclaimed Remains Coordinators
d	Coordinator Duties for Handling Indigent Veterans and Unclaimed Remains
e	Outreach to Custodians of Unclaimed Remains
f	Reporting Indigent Veterans and Unclaimed Remains Outreach
g	Claims by Funeral Homes or Other Third Parties
h	Resources
i	References

Introduction This topic provides information on the outreach program for indigent Veterans and unclaimed remains.

Change Date March 15, 2022

a. Definition of Indigent Veterans and Unclaimed Remains

Indigent refers to someone without assets sufficient to pay for the cost of funeral arrangements. Each state has an obligation to take care of the disposition of those who become the responsibility of the state as indigent Veterans, to include those who find themselves in state care such as:

- hospitals (to include mental health facilities)
- care homes
- penitentiaries and local jails
- homeless shelters

Unclaimed Veteran remains are defined as Veterans:

- who have not been claimed by relatives and/or friends
- who do not have sufficient resources available in their estate to cover the burial and funeral expenses
- whose burial is not the responsibility of any other Federal, State, or local agency.

Reference: For information on the definition for unclaimed Veterans remains, see [M21-1, Part XI, Subpart iii, Chapter 1, Section A, 1, h.](#)

For information on the general eligibility for unclaimed Veteran remains, see [M21-1, Part XI, Subpart iii, Chapter 1, Section B, 7.](#)

b. Regional Office Responsibilities

Each Regional Office (RO) Director will appoint at least one Indigent Veterans and Unclaimed Remains Coordinator (IVURC) for the RO. The coordinator will be responsible for conducting outreach and processing requests for funeral arrangements of unclaimed remains to include validation of Veteran status for a deceased person alleged to be a Veteran.

ROs will ensure that coordinators listed on the [Outreach Coordinators webpage](#) are up to date and any change is immediately submitted by the station's point of contact.

Reference: For more information on processing requests for unclaimed Veteran remains, see [M21-1, Part XI, Subpart iii, Chapter 1, Section B, 7.](#)

c. Training for Indigent Veterans and Unclaimed Remains Coordinators

Indigent Veterans and Unclaimed Remains Coordinators (IVURCs) will have an annual requirement to complete courses in the Talent Management System (TMS). These course(s) will be assigned to IVURCs and must be completed within 90 days of assignment and annually thereafter. The mandated course(s) listed below must be completed by September 30th of every fiscal year.

Coordinators will also participate in annual virtual and teleconference national training calls facilitated by Outreach, Transition and Economic Development (OTED).

d. Coordinator Duties for Handling Indigent Veterans and Unclaimed Remains

The coordinator duties include, but are not limited to:

- Develop and maintain a local resource directory of custodians of unclaimed remains, advocacy groups, and community organizations
- Develop and maintain partnerships with local VAMCs and NCA facilities
- Develop and maintain partnerships with state and tribal cemeteries
- Provide Veteran benefit and survivor information to:
 - Local funeral directors
 - Local medical examiner's offices
 - Veteran's Service Organizations (VSOs)
 - County VSOs
 - Local medical facilities and nursing homes
 - Local agencies of jurisdiction providing service for unclaimed remains
- Review if First Notice of Death (FNOD) action has taken place in accordance with the Veteran FNOD processing guidelines. For more information on FNOD guidelines, please refer to [M21-1, Part XI, Subpart i, Chapter 1, Section A.](#)
- Process requests for funeral arrangements of unclaimed remains, to include validation of Veteran status, per M21-1, Part XI, Subpart iii, Chapter 1, Section B, 7.
- Coordinate with Custodians of Unclaimed Remains such as local funeral homes to provide burial services for unclaimed remains
- Conduct After Action Reviews (AAR) in ORT+ for the RO Director to finalize reports
- Complete outreach requirements outlined in M27-1 II.11. Section e
- Accept and timely complete referrals from the National Call Centers and Public Contact Teams

Note: State and Tribal Veterans Cemeteries may also have additional eligibility requirements.

e. Outreach to Custodians of Unclaimed Remains

Indigent Veterans and Unclaimed Remains Coordinators at each RO will conduct no less than 3 hours of outreach per quarter during the fiscal year.

The outreach efforts of coordinators will focus on disseminating information to the custodians of unclaimed remains. Examples of in-person and virtual outreach events include, but are not limited to:

- Conferences, expositions, and symposiums
- Briefings and presentations
- Town halls
- Lunch and learns

Individual contact with funeral homes, medical examiners etc.

f. Reporting Indigent Veterans and Unclaimed Remains Outreach

Indigent Veterans and Unclaimed Outreach Coordinators will enter outreach events and activities in the [Outreach Reporting Tool Plus \(ORT+\) Portal](#). Coordinators will complete the ORT+ after-action report (AAR) and all required data fields no later than five business days after the event ends. Coordinators will follow the [M27-1 Part II, Chapter 1, Outreach Services Programs](#), for entering unclaimed remains outreach in the ORT+. OTED's IVUR Program Manager will review ORT+ monthly for compliance of outreach requirement.

g. Claims by Funeral Homes or Other Third Parties

If a funeral home or third party who handled the arrangements for a Veteran whose remains are unclaimed files a claim for NSC burial allowance based on unclaimed remains, VBA pays:

- the NSC burial allowance based on unclaimed remains, and
- reimbursement for transportation expenses if the Veteran is buried in a national cemetery.

The plot or interment allowance should not be paid to a funeral home or third party if the Veteran is buried in a State Veterans cemetery or other cemetery as listed in [38 CFR 3.1707](#); the plot or interment allowance is payable to the State or agency or political subdivision of a State.

[VA Form 21P-530EZ Application for Burial Benefits](#) is used for Non-service connected (NSC) burial allowances claims based on unclaimed remains.

References: For more information on unclaimed Veteran remains, see

- the plot or interment allowance, see
 - [M21-1, Part XI, Subpart iii, Chapter 1, Section B, 5.](#)
 - [38 CFR 3.1707\(b\)](#)
 - [38 CFR 3.1708](#)

- transportation expenses for burial in national cemeteries, see [38 CFR 3.1709](#).

h. Resources

Name	Description	Location
National Cemetery Administration (NCA)	Provides the step-by-step process for determining eligibility and arranging burial for unclaimed Veterans.	NCA Unclaimed Remains Factsheet
National Cemetery Administration (NCA)	Provides NCA Resource Guide.	NCA Resource Guide

i. References

[M21-1, Part XI, Subpart iii, Chapter 1, Section A.](#) – General Information on Burial Benefits and Allowances
[M21-1, Part XI, Subpart iii, Chapter 1, Section B.](#) – Burial Benefits
[M21-1, Part XI, Subpart iii, Chapter 1, Section C.](#) – Burial Authorization Payment Issues
